Symposium Gender Apartheid and Islam Part 4

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Sina: Ms. Roach starts her response with accusing Robert Spencer and I of having "reckless hate". All I can say is that I am religion blind, race blind and gender blind. I do not see these differences. I am blind to them. Therefore I love Muslims; just the same way I love Jews, Christians, Atheists or any other person. But I can also say that, unlike some ideologies and religions, I do not divide mankind into believers and unbelievers and do not hate people for what they believe. I fight against belief-systems of hate -- not against victims of those belief-systems. I don't think there is anything wrong to hate ignorance, violence, barbarity, and discrimination.

Ms. Roach says **torturing prisoners**, is completely forbidden in Islam. Is it?

"In March 2002, Iran's parliament (Majles) passed a bill aimed at limiting the widespread practice of torture and the use of forced confessions in criminal trials. On Sunday June 9, the bill was rejected by the Council of Guardians, a body of twelve senior clerics appointed by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamene'i, whose role is to ensure that all laws passed by the Majles are compatible, in their view, with Islam. The Council argued that the bill would limit the authority of judges to adjudicate on the admissibility of confessions and therefore ruled that the bill was against the principles of Islam." [Source]

Perhaps Ms. Roach would tell us that Iran is not a true Islamic country. Was Muhammad a good Muslim?

"Some people were sick and they said, "O Allah's Apostle! Give us shelter and food. So when they became healthy they said, "The weather of Medina is not suitable for us." So he sent them to Al-Harra with some she-camels of his and said, "Drink of their milk." But when they became healthy, they killed the shepherd of the Prophet and drove away his camels. The Prophet sent some people in their pursuit. Then he got their hands and feet cut and their eyes were branded with heated pieces of iron. I saw one of them licking the earth with his tongue till he died." **Bukhari 7. 71.58**

In another story, we read that "After Muhammad raided the fortress of Kheibar and the unarmed population were taken by surprise, Muslim fighters killed many of the citizens until they surrendered. Muhammad allowed them to leave the country, but that they should give up all their property to the conqueror. With the rest, came forth ***Kinana***, chief of the Jews of Kheibar, and his cousin.

Muhammad accused them both of keeping back, in contravention of the compact, a portion of their riches, especially the treasures of the Bani Nadhir, which Kinana had obtained as a

marriage portion with his wife, Safiyah the daughter of the chief of that tribe. "*Where are the vessels of gold*," he asked," *which you used to lend to the people of Mecca ?*" They protested that they no longer possessed them. "*if you conceal anything from me,*" continued Muhammad, "*and I should gain knowledge of it, then your lives and the lives of your families shall be at my disposal*." They answered that it should be so. A traitorous Jew, having divulged to Muhammad the place in which a part of their wealth was deposited, he sent and fetched it. On the discovery of this attempt at imposition, Kinana was subjected to cruel torture, -- "fire being placed upon his breast till his breath had almost departed," -in the hope that he would confess where the rest of his treasures were concealed. Muhammad then gave command, and the heads of the two chiefs were severed from their bodies." **[Tabari]**

On that very night Muhammad took the 17 year old Safiyah the bride of Kinana to his tent, slept with that grieving woman, and claimed her as his wife.

Ms. Roach, addressing someone with “dear” is not necessarily patronizing, nor is it sexual harassment. It can often be a sign of respect. It can be a polite way to address people, as in “Dear Sir”, “Dear Mr. President”, etc. But if that is offensive to you I shall refrain from addressing you in that matter.

Ms. Roach writes: “If any Muslim woman feels she is oppressed, it is up to her to ask Allah's help and then with Allah's help free herself by any means necessary, even if it means death.” Thank you Ms. Roach for your wise advice. I believe most women prefer to be delivered by the rule of law – a law that protects their rights, dignity and lives rather than seek death, like many Muslim women do in Iran and other Islamic countries. The rights to live and to be free are birth rights of every human being. In the kafirdom of the West women don’t have to supplicate Allah and seek death. They are protected by the law and enjoy the same rights that men do.

Realizing the absurdity of her own statement, Ms. Roach introduces a red herring:

“Some people will criticize me saying that a woman shouldn't have to choose to die in order not to be beaten, but I ask you: What do we tell American women who are in domestic violence situations?”

First of all the incidences of domestic abuse in America or other civilized non-Islamic countries compared to the pandemic abuse of women in Islamic countries are negligible. Second, I would say to the American women who are victims of violence to immediately go to authorities and seek protection. I am afraid such thing for women in Islamic countries can happen only in their dreams. The Sharia law is not on the side of the abused woman. In Islamic countries there are no shelters for abused women. They either endure the pain of slavery or beseech Allah for death.

In comparing the fate of the abused women in Islam and the West, Ms. Roach says; “At least in Islam, if this is the case, a woman will attain paradise with Allah if she is the innocent victim of a psychopath, instead of just another domestic violence statistic.”

That sums up everything. A woman in Islam will remain a slave and abused by her psychopath husband and her freedom is in her death and a vacuous promise of a paradise. Interestingly, in her previous statements, Ms. Roach assured us that if she is abused she would fight back and defend herself. Why Ms. Roach? Aren't you interested to go to paradise? Are you going to risk going to hell and be burned for eternity by rebelling against your husband? Apparently, in your philosophy, death is good -- but only for the neighbors.

Mr. El Mallah, you state: "my understanding of Quran/Hadith comes from scholars' opinions." Are these opinions in agreement with the Quran and hadith? Why follow the opinion of the scholars when you can perfectly read the Quran and haidith on your own and come to your own conclusion?

I see you constantly blame the Muslims and say: "Muslims in the so-called Muslim countries are not aware of their religion." Do you think the Quran and the misogynistic examples set by Muhammad have nothing to do with the violence perpetrated against women? Do you really believe if Muslims start reading the Quran and learn that women are like tilt to men 2:223, that they are less than men, 2:228, that their rights to inheritance and testimony are half 4:11-12, 2:282, that if disobedient they should be beaten 4:34, that they are deficient in intelligence and the majority of them will go to hell, and other not so flattering remarks such as these, they will start respecting women more?

You accuse me of judging Islam and the Quran based on the behavior of Muslims. I have not done so and will not do that. I first quote the Quran then the hadith and then show the effect of these on Muslims. I make observations about Islam by gauging what Muhammad said and did and not for what Muslims do. Curiously, instead of the nefarious anti-woman influence of the Quran and hadith, you find the influence of America and secularism responsible for the misogyny in Islamic countries. This attitude is mind boggling. But then again, we have people who blame the CIA and Mossad for 9/11.

You say that the bottom line is that Allah promised: "They shall have all that they will desire with their Lord. That is the reward of the good doers." 39:34

So the bottom line is that paradise is a child's fantasyland. You can wish anything and it will be yours. But isn't this statement in disagreement with other verses of the Quran that clearly describe how paradise is made and how many celestial whores men get? (The word whore in English is the same Persian word hoor borrowed by Muhammad and used in the Quran) Suppose you want 75 or 750 whores; can you have your wish? If so, why did Muhammad specifiy two in one place and seventy two in another place? Why even give a number when the choice is left up to the believer? This to me seems contradiction. Muhammad talks about four rivers of wine, milk, honey and water running in paradise. If it is up to me I like fruit juices of various kinds and champaign too. And I do not like them running as rivers but rather served in bottles. Why does the Quran describe paradise when the fantasies of the believers set the limit?

Mr. El-Mallah accuses me of misinterpreting verse 30:21. But I quoted various Muslim scholars who thought this verse means women are like animals created for the enjoyment of men. In fact, the way women are treated in Islamic countries show most Muslims are in agreement with those scholars. Can Mr. El-Mallah explain how a clear and easy to understand book such as the Quran has been so misunderstood by the majority of Muslims? Why is it that only those Muslims who try to sell Islam to the Westerners are the ones who understand it? Finally, why instead of teaching "peaceful Islam" to Westerners, do you not first try to correct the misunderstandings of the Muslims?

I said the relationship between husband and wife in Islam is akin to that of employer and employee. Actually it is more like a master and slave relationship. As Mr. El-Mallah reaffirms, the matrimonial house is HIS. She lives in HIS house. The children are HIS. In the case of divorce, Muslim women have no right to the custody of their own children unless the child is an infant and even then he should be given to the father after he is weaned or is no more a toddler. Yes, he is to provide for her food, cloth, medicine, accommodation, transportation etc. But wouldn't any master do the same for his slave? If you had a she ass, wouldn't you provide her for her food, accommodation, saddle, etc?

Both Ms. Roach and Mr. El-Mallah repeated that the husband has the obligation to satisfy his wife sexually. This is news to me. Let us get practical here. A man with four wives (actually some Muslims believe that there is no limit to the number of wives in Islam) will enjoy sex four times more frequently than either one of his wives. So if he has sex 12 times per month, each of his wives can have it only three times per month (provided he does not have favorites and the older and uglier wives are not neglected). As you can see, this claim is utterly baseless. Furthermore, in some Islamic countries, Muslims are inspired by a hadith to mutilate their girls' genitals, so they can never have orgasm -- even if the husband does his best. It is interesting that Muslims insist that black is white and vice versa.

Mr. El-Mallah claims Islam treats men and women equally because it puts equal responsibility on both parties. He confuses responsibility with rights. Yes, we know that in Islam women are responsible for a lot of things -- including obeying their husbands and satisfying them sexually, even when they do not feel well. A hadith says:

"Allah's Apostle said, "If a husband calls his wife to his bed (i.e. to have sexual relation) and she refuses and causes him to sleep in anger, the angels will curse her till morning." **Bukhari 4.54.460**

In another place we read:

"The prophet of Allah said: When a man calls his wife to satisfy his desire, let her come to him though she is occupied at the oven." Mishkat al-Masabih, English translation, Book I, Section 'Duties of husband and wife', Hadith No. 61.

In Islam the duties and responsibilities of the wife are stated clearly. But where are her rights? Does she own anything? Can she have any claim to the house that she is living in, to

her children or even to the cloths that he has bought for her with HIS money? In Islam women have many responsibilities but very few rights.

Mr. El Mallah states, “Mr. Sina is claiming that ‘A good marriage is one where husband and wife are equal partners in every sense’. Well, does that mean that the wife can tell her husband “why is it me who should carry the baby in my tummy?”

I am afraid our friend is confusing -- again -- responsibilities with rights. Of course men and women are different, biologically, emotionally, psychologically and in many other ways. Each one has his/her own strength and that is why they form the partnership. In any partnership the partners compliment each other. For example, you put the capital and I put the expertise and the labor and we make a partnership. The reason you and I form the partnership is because each one of us has something the other one does not have but needs.

In a marriage, husband and wife, each contribute according to their capacity and strength. Here we are talking about rights. If you and I form a “partnership”, where you put the money and I put the labor, where you order me and I obey you, where everything is in your name, and if we split you keep everything and I walk away with nothing. Where you have even the right to beat me, this is not partnership. This is slavery, because during the years I worked for you, you paid me no salary. I have no savings. You only maintained me, paid for my food and clothing so I could continue to work for you. And now that I am older, you kick me out and I am entitled to nothing. I can do only one thing and that is pray to Allah to take me away. That is not partnership. That is not even employment. That is slavery.

Mr. El-Mallah asks what is unfair with Khole where a woman can obtain divorce after forgoing her dowry. The unfair part is the forgoing of the dowry. This means that if a husband decides to get rid of her wife and give her nothing, he would beat her so much that she is forced to forego her rights just to get her divorce. Not only she gets nothing from his wealth, she is forced to even forego the little gifts that he had bought for her. I honestly believe this is unfair. Don’t you Mr. El-Mallah?

As for the incident between Muhammad and Jauniyya, the princess of Bani Jaun, the text of the hadith is clear. Muhammad made sexual advances on her and told her “give yourself to me as a gift”. The word used here is *habba*. This is not a proposal for marriage. Habba which means “give as a gift” is free sex. The favor is paid pack with a gift from the man to the woman in the form of goods or money. There are other hadiths that point out to this practice. One apocryphal hadith that sheds light on this practice is about Abdullah the father of Muhammad who was allegedly approached by a woman who told him, “Take me as a gift”. But Abdullah went to his wife and conceived Muhammad. On his way back he went to that woman and declared his readiness for the proposition but she spurned him saying, "before I saw a light in your forefront; now that light is gone, you gave it to another woman so go away". This hadith is fabricated to claim that the prostitute had recognized the light of Muhammad while he was still in his father’s testicles. It is a ludicrous hadith fit for the gullible Muslims. But it is important because it shows the practice of *habba* was common among the Arabs. (See also **Muslim 8.3253**) In our language we call it prostitution.

The hadith says Muhammad asked Jauniyya to give herself to him in habba, she responded "Can a princess give herself (in marriage) [sic] to an ordinary man?" Muhammad raised his hand to pat her [sic] so that she might become tranquil." Any reasonable person can figure out what happened. Muhammad's advances must have offended this woman for her saying "Can a princes give herself to an ordinary man? The word (marriage) is put in parenthesis because it is the insertion of the translator. Then the hadith says "Muhammad raised his hand to pat her so she become tranquil". Obviously she had become upset. Women do not get offended by marriage proposals; they get offended when they are cheapened and solicited for sex. Then she exclaimed "I seek refuge with Allah from you." This is clear that this "patting" must have been of a violent nature. Clearly the writer of the haidth (or the translator) must have felt embarrassed of such conduct of his prophet and has tried to soft-sell a violent incident by choosing less harsher words. The so-called "patting" must have been threatening enough to make the woman exclaim "I seek refuge with Allah" and stopping Muhammad. It must have been also guilt inducing for Muhammad enough to try to compensate her with gifts (stolen from her own tribe) The whole story is despicable and certainly not worthy of a man who claimed to be the best example to follow.

Mr. El–Mallah says that it is not the NAME of the Sura (The Women) which is the testimony of her high status in Islam but the CONTENT of this chapter that makes this clear. I am happy that the alibi of the name of the Sura is withdrawn. But as we saw, it is in this chapter that Muhammad says beat your wives. There is no mention of equality of rights for women neither in this chapter nor anywhere else in the Quran.

Mr. El-Mallah says that "the financial security for a Muslim woman is guaranteed. Her Husband is responsible for that, if she has no husband, then it is her father, brother, or uncle. If she has no family, then it is the State that should take care of her financially. So under the Islamic law, a woman doesn't need to fend for herself."

The simple question that begs an answer is why not giving the woman her independence so she can fend for herself and earn her own livelihood with dignity and not be a burden to others? This is unfair to both men and women and puts her at the mercy of men all her life. She is reduced to a virtual beggar. What if the brother has his own family to feed? What if there are several single sisters and only one brother or one aging father? Why keep a woman in slavery and maintain her? Why put her in a jail and then provide for her? Why can't she be a free, productive member of the society? Why should she live like a parasite all her life, be humiliated and lose her dignity and pride? Who benefits from this? What is the rationale of this absurd law?

To justify the violence against women in Islam, Mr. El Mallah reports a long list of the statistics of crime and violence in America . This is a logical fallacy very much in vogue with Muslims. It is called *tu quoque*. This is the famous "you too" fallacy. They immediately try to find a mote in the eyes of others to justify the beam in their own. Yes indeed, no country is without crime and violence. However the violence happening in Islamic countries against women is not even considered a crime. It is a common practice; it is not reported and not

punished because it is not against the law. In the West, violence against women is a crime and that is why you see statistics. Show me the same statistics in Islamic publications.

I think through this symposium we established that Islam is a misogynist religion. Women in Islam are barely regarded above animals and in marriage they have as much rights as slaves in the house of their master. As Ms. Roach eloquently put it, a Muslim woman's freedom comes in her DEATH. So if you are an abused women living in an Islamic country, Ms. Roach's advice to you is: *pray to Allah so he may precipitate your death and set you free.* Meanwhile, Ms. Roach, who lives in a non-Islamic country and is protected by the laws of the Kafirs, boasts about her own "courage" to fight back if her husband becomes abusive. In other words, she doesn't want Muslim women under Islamic law to fight for their rights. Only she has that privilege. This is the perfect conclusion for this discussion.

Spencer: Ms. Roach begins her concluding remarks by quoting Tolkien: "What can one do against such reckless hate?" The idea that Mr. Sina and I must hate Muslims because we dare to tell the truth about what Islam teaches is a common calumny straight out of the playbook of those who revere as a prophet the man who said, "War is deceit" (Bukhari IV:52:267). Yet it was neither Mr. Sina nor I who put this question and answer exchange, complete with supporting hadiths at the Muslim Students' Association website of the University of Houston:

Question: We always hear the Hadith, "Women have a shortcoming in understanding and religion." Some of the men state it to insult women. We would like you to explain to us the meaning of that Hadith.**Response:** The Prophet's words and their explanation is as follows:

"I have seen none having more of a shortcoming in reasoning and religion yet, at the same time, robbing the wisdom of the wisest men than you." They said, "O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) what is the shortcoming in our reasoning?" He said "Is it not the case that the testimony of two women is equivalent to that of one man" They said, "O Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), what is the shortcoming in our religion" He said, "Is it not the case that when you have your menses you neither pray or fast?"1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) explained that their shortcoming in reasoning is found in the fact that their memory is weak and that their witness is in need of another woman to corroborate it….This also does not mean that she is less than men in every matter or that men are superior to her in every aspect. Yes, as a class, men are superior to women in general. This is true for a number of reasons, as Allah has stated,

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend [to support them] from their means" **(al-Nisa 34).**

However, she may excel him in many matters. How many women are greater than many men with respect to their intelligence, religion and proficiency. It has been narrated from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that women as a species or class are less than men in

understanding and religion from the point of view of the matters that the Prophet (peace be upon him) himself explained….Shaikh ibn Baz

I suppose Sheikh ibn Baz and Muhammad himself hate Muslims too? Or is it just I who must hate Muslims because I dare to quote them? Ms. Roach is dealing in a patent absurdity. This is a symposium about women's rights in Islam, but instead of forthrightly acknowledging the obstacles and difficulties women face in Islamic lands and offering positive solutions, Mr. El-Mallah and Ms. Roach have denied, obfuscated, distorted, smeared Mr. Sina and me, and tried to deflect attention to Christianity. If this is what we can expect from Islamic "moderates," the future for women in Islam looks bleak indeed.

As for the scholars Mr. Sina and I quoted who, according to Ms. Roach, "DO NOT REPRESENT ISLAM," it's an interesting phenomenon: I have been studying Islam in depth since 1980, and yet every single Islamic authority I have ever quoted is someone that no Muslim has ever heard of or pays any attention to at least according to the Muslims I have debated. When I quoted Al-Azhar's Sheikh Tantawi endorsing suicide bombing, As`ad AbuKhalil told me that every Muslim actually laughs at Al-Azhar and holds it in contempt. (Hussein Ibish trotted out another well-worn dodge, asserting that Tantawi's words were mistranslated.) Yet you can ask virtually anyone, and they'll tell you that Al-Azhar University in Cairo is revered and influential throughout the Islamic world. Maybe Ms. Roach has indeed never heard of Ibn Kathir's Tafsir, which Mr. Sina quotes, but to millions of Muslims worldwide, it is justly dubbed by its publisher "the most renowned and accepted explanation of the Qur'an in the entire world."

Nor did Mr. Sina or I, or Ms. Roach's other bogeymen the "American media and government," compose Qur'an 4:34 or its common understanding in the Islamic world. Mr. El-Mallah's high-sounding explanation of all the many safeguards that women in Islamic lands possess likewise founders on reality. If any reader actually takes her up on her invitation to learn about Islam from Muslims, once he or she gets beyond the distortions and apologetics, the nefarious uses of 4:34 will be clear as they are to any objective observer of the Islamic world. They are inescapable.

Mr. El-Mallah adduces Sura 24:33, "But force not your maids to prostitution (when they desire chastity)" to establish that slave girls are not to be raped. But alas, this verse does not accomplish what he wants it to. The Qur'an in Sura 33:50 grants men the right to use slave girls sexually. 24:33 is simply not on topic: a man having sex with his slave girl is not making her a prostitute especially when he is explicitly allowed to do so by the Qur'an. Mr. El-Mallah still has not established, and cannot establish, that any consent on the girl's part is required. The Hadith he quotes, unfortunately, does not establish a general principle as is illustrated by many other ahadith that do not even consider the woman's consent as a concept. One was quoted above by Mr. Sina: a notorious incident in which Muhammad clearly permits his

men to have sex with captive women without a word about consent being uttered. Another is Sunan Abu Dawud 11:2153, which stipulates that “it is not lawful for a man who believes in Allah and the Last Day to have intercourse with a captive woman till she is free from a menstrual course.” It doesn’t say that it is not lawful for a Muslim to have intercourse with a captive woman unless she consents. Nor does any other hadith.

Mr. El-Mallah also provides some dubious references in support of his contention that Muhammad directed his followers to beat their wives with nothing larger than a toothbrush. This tradition does not appear in any of the Hadith collections considered most reliable by Muslims. Mr. El-Mallah cites “Sahih Muslim, Ketab AlHajj, no. 2137.” The word *miswak* (tooth stick) does not appear in Kitab Al-Hajj of Sahih Muslim; nor does it appear in Sahih Muslim 2137. I challenge Mr. El-Mallah or anyone to produce this tradition of Muhammad recommending toothbrushes for beating women from Sahih Muslim or any of the other hadith collections Muslims value as most reliable: the *Sahih Sittah*.

As for his material about the abuse of women in the U.S., once again he is trying to deflect attention away from the topic of the Symposium, which is the status of women in Islam. As long as he and others like him continue to play dodge ball instead of confronting the uncomfortable facts, Muslim women will continue to suffer.

FP: Mr. El-Mallah, Robert Spencer, Julia Roach and Ali Sina, our time is up. Thank you for such an informative discussion. We hope to see you again soon.